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ABSTRACT

Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II applies to schools, each school district should have a coordinator to develop an action plan covering the school system. Requirements fall into four areas: general nondiscrimination, equally effective communication, program accessibility, and employment. Compliance with the law is the responsibility of the administration and the coordinator, but all staff can be involved. The major goal is to provide access to the school and programs to all students and school visitors regardless of their disability. All buildings do not have to be accessible, but all programs, course offerings, cafeteria, hallways, lavatories, phones, and anything open to the persons in the facility must be. ADA requires a self-evaluation of the school to see what problems must be addressed. Examples of school projects incorporating ADA content include the following: students in an architectural class selected a part of the school facility and did a study to determine its accessibility; a tech prep class viewed a playscape to see how it is accessible to all children. Connections with other curriculum areas include the following: discussion of civil rights and law enforcement in social studies; learning about diseases and disabilities in health; and ramp design in mathematics and science. Technology education offers opportunities for students with disabilities to learn self-reliance. Teachers can avoid incorrect, stereotypical, demeaning, or insensitive terms and use proper language when talking to a person with a disability. (Contains 20 references.) (YLB)

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CB Clark

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

CRAIG B. CLARK

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law in July 1990. Part of its intention is to make various facilities accessible and provide opportunities to handicapped Americans. ADA is for all persons with disabilities, also it is not limited to persons using wheel chairs. Other areas of concern are, but not limited to have visual

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disabilities, hearing impaired, contagious as well as non contagious diseases such as multiple sclerosis, HIV, heart disease, alcoholism and others. There are provisions for drug addiction but not for persons currently using illegal drugs. ADA has five titles or sections. Title II of the law applies to state and local governments this includes schools. Each school district should have a person who coordinates the development of an action plan which would cover the whole school system. I will be discussing how students should be aware of what ADA is about and several activities that have been effective in the classroom with students. Besides these activities there are many other concerns for teachers that should be addressed. Students should be aware of what disabilities are as well as interacting with persons who are disabled.

Transportation is also covered, all new buses must be equipped to accommodate wheel chairs. This is just part of what is stated in the law. About ten or twelve years ago in Hartford, Connecticut Edith Harris, an activist for people who are handicapped, who herself used a wheel chair wanted to board a bus. She was told that the bus could not accommodate her but the next one could. She waited for the next one and found that it also could not accommodate her. The third bus was the same story but this time she blocked the bus because she couldn't get on. The Hartford police were called to arrest her but they ran into a problem they could not arrest her. The reason why they could not arrest her was not because they felt it would be wrong or anything like that but because the wagon could not accommodate her due to the fact that she used a wheel chair. That problem too has since been changed, the paddy wagon can accommodate persons with disabilities.

The law covers many venues including schools. If the venue is a state or local agency then it is covered under Title II.

I would like to give several definitions of terms that I will be using:

Disability - The ADA utilizes a three-pronged definition of disability. For the purposes of coverage under the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as an individual who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. has a record or history of such impairment; or
3. is perceived or regarded as having such an impairment. (Ostroff, pg. 6)

Universal Design - is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

Barriers - Anything that can obstruct or prevent access to a facility, program or activity to persons with a disability.

Curb Ramp (cut) - A short ramp cutting through a curb or built up to it.

Accessibility - Describes a site, building, facility, or portion thereof that complies with ADAAG guidelines.

Requirements for Public Entities

The requirements of Title II fall into four broad areas:

1. general nondiscrimination requirements
2. equally effective communication
3. program accessibility
4. employment

Each of these areas of the law is discussed here. (Ostroff, pg. 12)

Under number 1 above there are several areas, they are: equal opportunity - all persons should be able to have access to the same opportunities. Integrated programs - there should not be separate programs, but there are certain circumstances when they can be separate. Programs are ones that are open and available to all. Methods of administration - caution must be used to ensure that when setting up programs that methods of operation do not leave opportunity to discriminate. Use of a drivers license as ID can be considered a way to discriminate. Choice of contractors - when hiring a contractor practices that may discriminate must be avoided. Licensing and certification - when a government agency issues license or other forms of certification, the agency must be cautious not to discriminate because of a disability that the person who is applying may have, if they are qualified for a position then they cannot be denied the certification or license. Reasonable modification of policies - a policy of practice must be modified if it discriminates against people with disabilities, practices, and procedures, eligibility criteria when screening persons for participation etc. caution must also be followed to insure that someone does not set up procedures that would screen

candidates due to disabilities because and surcharges - a surcharge may not be levied because of the addition, or use of features, or personnel which may assist persons with disabilities.

Under number two the sub-categories include: interpreter services, public television, telephone communications, emergency telephone services, general information.

Number three from above will have under it: access to existing facilities, fundamental alteration and undue burdens historic preservation programs, new construction and alterations to existing facilities, leases and maintenance of accessible features.

The employment aspect of the Americans with Disabilities Act covers persons employed by public entities, as well as private business with fifteen or more employees. I will not be going into this part of ADA but it is part of the law and must be adhered to by the employer. Remember the Americans with Disabilities Act covers all persons within the school, this includes the employees, all employees - teachers, administrators, cafeteria staff etc. In addition to staff also protected are parents and members of the public with disabilities.

Compliance with the law is the responsibility of the administration and the coordinator mentioned above but all staff can be involved in a number of ways. Understanding the law is of course very important but the major goal should be to provide access to the school and programs to all regardless of their disability.

The law should not be looked upon as a piece of legislation that requires the school (or other facilities) to build structures or make major modifications. What ADA does expect is to provide access to all. It should not be looked upon as a very expensive undertaking but one that can be solved, sometimes with a small cost to the school system and that also may provide results that will be beneficial to all persons. One example of this is the universal design such as a curb cut on a sidewalk. This is provided for persons using wheelchairs to be able to get up a curb. Other uses for curb cuts can be - bicycles, delivery carts, strollers as well as many other uses which people have found in using the curb cuts.

All buildings don't have to be accessible but all programs must be. Schools must make all programs available. Modifications can be used such as having a class on the first floor of a building to allow for a student with a disability, staff member parent or anyone else to be part of that class. All programs must be available along with course offerings, the cafeteria, hallways, lavatories, phones and anything that is open to the persons in the facility must include persons with disabilities. Remember besides the everyday persons who use the facility there also are individuals who may want to access the building on occasions such as parents who may have disabilities, the program must be accessible to them as well. When planing on implementing ADA into a school or any facility stress to those involved that ADA is "the right thing to do ethically and morally." (Robinson pg. 1)

Weaver High School in Hartford, Connecticut is one of three high schools in the city. The school population is a little over 1300 student with 100 teachers. There are four

teachers in the technology education department. About nine years ago Weaver High School set up a program which allowed students with disabilities to attend the school and be part of the student body. As time progressed we found several problems that existed and began to address them. We set up a committee that would determine where there was a barrier or a potential barrier. In bringing these to the attention of the administration we also made several suggestions. Due to budget constraints we would try to find a solution that would be easy to accomplish. This would be prior to any potential legal directives to correct the problems within the school. In Connecticut high schools must be accredited every ten years. This is a very extensive process and involves a number of major committees that deal with different phases of the accreditation process. I was the chairman of the site and facilities committee which allowed me to include our activities for handicap accessability as part of the evaluation. I feel that many of the actions that we had taken prior to the evaluation helped to achieve a positive review.

For every school there are different concerns and different needs. This of course is due to the different facilities that exist but also the different populations that each school has. What of course is important and is required under title II of the ADA is to do a self evaluation of the school and see where there are problems that need to be addressed. Doing this when there is no immediate need can allow for time to work up solutions, do research into possible solutions and to make plans when changes are needed due to the real need for handicap access. What has applied for Weaver High School may be similar to another school, but on the other hand there may be totally

different concerns. Weaver has been fortunate to have a consultant Melissa Marshall, from "Progressive Attitudes" come to the school on a regular basis and work with the staff and students in being aware of the Americans with Disabilities Act, this activity is funded through the Council on Developmental Disability Americans with Disabilities coalition of Connecticut. The training provided to Weaver High School has allowed for those in attendance to develop knowledge of ADA and needs of persons with disabilities. Being aware of the reasons why we have these rules is important, ADA guidelines should not be looked on as a law that will create inconvenience, but on the other hand create convenience for those involved. She has also assisted on some projects that have proven to get the students active in concerns while being able to evaluate sites or parts of the school and determining their accessibility to persons with disabilities. I stress persons and not just students. As was said above anyone coming into the school is protected by the law.

What has become a term project for student in my architectural classes has been to select a part of the school facility, do a study of it and determine if it is accessible or not. We use a document from the U.S. Architectural & Transportation Barriers Compliance Board the "Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities" The acronym for this is ADAGG. This document along with a checklist from the Title II Action Guide as well as others which can be used to evaluate if the facility meets the AADAG or UFAS standards. The students as part of the first classroom activity receive a evaluation sheet for rest rooms. After a brief lecture the students are led through parts of the building. As we go down the hall we

examine certain things that may be passed everyday and evaluate if it is good or bad according to the provided guidelines. I have provided copies of part of the ADAGG guide as well as a checklist that is used for our evaluations. In looking at the first page of the checklist the first item is:

> MULTI-STALL REST ROOMS
> (ADAAG 4.17)
>
> rr12) Is the rest room doorway at least 32 inches wide?
>
> Measure doorway width between door jamb and hinged part of door, or between jambs if no door.
>
> Check Yes - No - N/A
>
> POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
> _ Install offset (swing-clear) hinges on door. Contact your local hardware store for more information.
> _ Widen doorway (Ostroff, pg. 95)

For the student activity the guide and checklist is used to determine if there is compliance or not. If it is not the student must draw how it exists and how to correct the problems. The solution must be realistic. I have been amazed at how much within the building needs to be addressed. The current site of Weaver High School was opened in 1974, there were several modifications since then. Due to the fact that the building was built on a swamp, work had to be done in 1988 to repair problems with the foundation. In 1990, changes were made in the ventilation system due to poor design and problems from Weaver being a sealed building. Last spring as a class project at the conclusion of

the year we wanted to see how we can make the school auditorium more accessible. At present a person using a wheel chair can only be in the auditorium if they are on the stage or in the last row (which is more than twenty rows). This may be in compliance so that a person can observe the activity in the auditorium. At one time students were rolled down the stairs and sat in the front. Under the ADA, the person must be able to get to the area unassisted. The solution was to remove several seats from the last row and have the wheel chairs in that row. The second floor entrance is accessible from an elevator. One student suggested that a solution would be to tear it down and start over. This may be true but it is not practical in solving the problem. Following brainstorming, evaluation, and discussion the student will draw the existing segment of the building on the CAD system. The second part of this project is to then draw possible solutions to the problems that have been found. The solutions if they seem feasible may be presented to the school administration as suggestions to correct the existing problem.

Another example that be we examine is drinking fountains. "Spouts shall be no higher than 36 in (915 mm), measured from the floor or ground surfaces to the spout outlet." (U.S. Architectural, pg. 217) By using these guidelines and check lists the students determine whether or not the school, or other site we may go to meet the standards. The drinking fountains in the hall are recessed in the wall and have a button that is pushed to run the water. The two problems with it is a person using a wheel chair cannot get to it and the button is to hard to push. We don't only talk about wheel chair access but other disabilities. The fountain must not be a hazard for blind person. This can happen when it protrudes from the wall, if it does then there are certain

considerations to make it not a hazard for persons who are blind. Solutions to the problems with the drinking fountain can be simple - provide drinking cups for those needing them will meet the ADA standards. This would also have to be practical, it may not be able to work in a public school hallway but in a faulty lounge it may be a solution. A control that can be turned on with a closed fist can be installed. Placing something under the protruding fountain can resolve the problem encountered by the blind person. As we continue down the hall we look at the fire alarm which is to high. The fire signal is good but it should have a bright strobe light which would alert a deaf person. When we get to the men's room we shut it down so that all can go into it and examine the door, the sinks, the stalls and literally the whole room. When grab bars were placed in one of the stalls the divider was taken out but, the toilet from the next stall was left in place making the stall still to small to use. In the enlarged stall in this case, finish the job and take the extra toilet out. We also stop at the pay phone which is to high, the elevator which needs Braille signage. At the conclusion of the trip the students already have an appreciation for the importance of the project and they also experience the many barriers that are easily overlooked. During this time possible ways to correct the problems are pointed out. The phone can easily be lowered, the fire alarm also can be lowered.

The local Burger King has allowed us come in and do evaluations. There are examples both good and bad for the students to observe and discuss. The tables have chairs that can be moved out of the way so that a wheel chair can go up to most of the tables. Remember all the tables do not have to be accessible just the proper percentage

of them. The Burger King is a popular place to use for accessibility evaluations because after we do the study we treat the students to lunch.

This past fall in West Hartford, Connecticut a play scape called Jonathan's Dream was built. Jonathan Barzach died from complications from spinal muscular atrophy he lived to be nine months old. His family wanted to have a playscape built in his memory Jonathan's Dream this would be a playscape for all children, with and without disabilities, so that they may play alongside each other. "Jonathan's Dream is not just a playground and a ramp." (Bazrach) This is a play scape for **all** children handicapped and students who are not handicapped. "Jonathan's Dream, a half acre playground that is wheelchair-accessible. It is one of only a handful in the Northeast that meets or exceeds all of the criteria set by the Americans with Disabilities Act." (Campbell pg. A3) The idea of a playscape has been very big for the last few years "Designing playgrounds in the real world is a complicated business, which is why the theme is so rich for high school designers. The following aspects of playground design are among the problems older kids might explore, and professional designers certainly would:

- assessing the need for a play area;
- getting to know the community, potential users and others who will be affected by the playground;
- exploring and mapping the site;
- learning about limitations: building regulations, budget, safety requirements;
- researching and designing the playground layout;

- researching and designing the activities and apparatus; "(Hutchinson pg. 13)

Working with playscapes is a fantastic design project, this one, Jonathan's Dream considers the needs of all children. Attractions such as a raised sand box is there this allows the child using a wheelchair to play with the sand, throw sand and do anything any the non disabled child would do. The Tech Prep class went there to view how this playscape was designed after reading about standard playscapes. We went with the special needs students. Upon arrival we had lunch at the park. The picnic tables accommodate persons using wheel chairs as well as those who don't use a wheel chairs to sit at the picnic table. The students were paired up and I noticed that the Tech Prep students at first were reluctant but after a short time were getting to know the students and were having a great time. "Simply put, we need to understand our own attitudes, anxieties, biases, and expectations before we can presume to understand, and attempt to meet, the needs of others." (Tamura pg. 24) By visiting this site, playing with the special needs students the students in the Tech Prep class learned about other students and became aware of the stereotypes that exist but mostly found that they had new friends. I found this was great in making my students sensitive towards these students needs. Also the fact that they are children just like any other and must be treated equally."...by paraphrasing Helen Keller who commented that blindness and deafness were not her greatest problem; it was the way that people treated her as a deaf and blind person." (Kimeldorf, pg. 49)

Connections with other curriculum areas are many. When there are integrated programs "It does mean that students get to solve problems that relate to what they are

studying in the academics, and explore the ways that technology plays a role – both positively and negatively." (Burke pg. 4) Think of how many times students as the question "Will we ever use this" (Cordi-Allen, pg. 6) here is how the activities are real life situations and the students can solve problems and implement the solutions. The ideas of the law works well with social studies classes as we discuss civil rights and law enforcement. Handicap parking is always an interesting topic in class. One scenario is a person goes to an ATM machine late at night. It is cold and raining, the stores in the plaza are closed. You drive up to the ATM machine and the three parking spaces in front of it are marked for handicapped parking only. Should you park there because of the weather and you fell more secure paring next to the building? This is in violation of the law. The connection with the health class is when students learn of diseases and disabilities what the limitations are and what the needs of persons are. This will assist in designing solutions for any situation that we work with in class. With science we have examined why the ramp must be no greater than one foot of ramp for each inch of elevation. What could happen if the angle is greater? In math students work on the solutions planning the ramps mentioned above.

At present we have one project that is being seriously considered. It is the installation of a ramp going to the football field. The students found that a former student who enjoyed going to the high school games was watching the games from the schools balcony which is a large distance from the field. A ramp has been proposed next to the existing stairs, it will be worked into the existing sidewalk which is in need of major repairs. The school may be receiving a grant to build a press box with an elevator.

The ramp may be added to the proposal and we will have been able to get one project accomplished. There are of course many areas in a building as large as Weaver High School. The building is five floors with over 100 class rooms. In the fall of 1995 there was a fire in one of the stairwells. During the building's evacuation one student who uses a power wheel chair was on the fourth floor. Her chair was left in the building and she was carried down the stairs to get her out of the building. This prompted committee meetings to discuss emergency evacuation plans for the future. Many questions and concerns came up due to this incident and we realized that a tragedy could happen.

One of the activities that the students did was go to the front parking lot to see how many parking spaces are needed to comply with ADAAG. At present there are two parking spaces each with a access area. One is in the front parking lot of the building, the other is at the end of the bus lane. From the total number of parking spaces in the front and rear lots there should be fourteen spaces. What started out as what would seem like a simple experience turned into a difficult problem to solve. The front lot is on street level. When a visitor comes to the building the visitor must sign in at the main office, this is below the street level and has to be accessed by going down twenty steps. There is a ramp but it is to steep and is banked making it unsafe for use by a person using a wheel chair. What started out seeming to be a problem just needing a bucket of yellow paint turned in to a major project that the students are working on to reach a solution that would be within the ADA guidelines.

"As teachers we all have a responsibility as well as a duty to become involved with our students. However, we also have a responsibility to become active in the

community where we live. If we can find ways to integrate the two together, the potential for contributing to society is maximized." (Pedras pg. 4) While this is a excellent area to work with for class activities, it also can be useful for community projects. The students after training in using the ADA guide and checklist can go into the community and assist in planning for projects around the city. "What, then, are some of the opportunities for technology teachers and students to become involved in societal activities? How can this enhance the educational experience?" (Pedras pg. 4) These questions are answered by the results to assist members of the community who can benefit from the solutions to the problems and the awareness of the students to the needs of members of the community. "All options and choices exist in the context of full commitment to systemic equity and the pursuit of excellence for all children. The public schools will continue to conform to standards of law and justice without prejudice or favoritism. Their central mission will continue to be to open doors of opportuniteis for each and every child." (Fennimore, pg. 55) Through projects such as these we can open many doors for all students. We can have students opening doors themselves for others. There has been efforts to include community service as part of graduation requirements or to at least get students more involved in various projects that will help to serve the community. By working with students from many disciplines from within the school, by having students become aware of the needs of others regardless if they are students or not, they will complete high school having provided service for others and at the same time had a very rewarding learning experience and developed skills that may be applied

in the future for a variety of jobs or assist in design of facilities that they may spend time in.

"Technology education provides an opportunity for students to learn about the process and knowledge related to technology that are needed to solve problems and extend human capabilities." (ITEA) As the activities progress the students within the technology education classes build knowledge and skills that will prepare them for possible career skills but also understanding of the needs of others. The persons with disabilities who benefit are those who are Weaver H.S. students, staff, parents, visitors etc.

A important service provided by technology education is the opportunities it offer so disabled students as well as other special needs learners. "Therefore, the technical skills and competencies that are acquired through technology education must provide special need students with better opportunities to become more self-reliant, resourceful, and productive citizens." (Buffer, pg 7) At this time all the students I have do not have any disabilities which I am aware off. The work that my present Students are doing is not so much for themselves but others. Likewise the day may come that the students will be able to apply the skills they have learned, or use them at home for family or even self needs.

During the various activities, lessons, discussions and work proper language is important. I know I have used terms that are incorrect and have to correct myself. Many terms that are used my be stereotypical, demeaning or insensitive. Proper language etiquette will help when talking to a person with a disability:

"LANGUAGE

General Guidelines

- Always put people, not the disability, first
- Avoid words that are patronizing or demeaning
- Use value-neutral terms
- Avoid clichés and platitudes.

Specific Guidelines

- Do not refer to people with disabilities as "*the* disabled", "*the* blind", "*the* deaf", "*the* retarded." Use instead, "person with a disability," "person with a visual impairment," "hearing impaired."
- Avoid the term *handicapped.*
- Never refer to people with disabilities as "crippled," "suffering," "unfortunate," or "invalids." These terms define people in terms of their condition and create demeaning images.
- Do not use euphemisms such as "physically challenged," "handi-capable," or "differently-abled." They are usually coined by nondisabled individuals. People with disabilities are aware that they have a disability and would prefer not to be described in euphemistic terms.
- Avoid patronizing terms such as "brave," courageous," "inspirational," "gutsy," and "special."
- Do not use "confined to," "suffers from," "victim of," or other similar language that evokes emotions. Use "person who uses a wheelchair," or "person who has cerebral palsy."
- Avoid referring to people who don't have disabilities as "normal," "healthy," or "able-bodied." The appropriate term is "nondisabled."
- Terms such as "crazy," "demented," "neurotic," and "abnormal" should be avoided.
- Do not use labels, such as "epileptic." Use "person who has epilepsy."

ETIQUETTE TIPS

- Always speak directly to a person who has a disability. Do not assume that a companion will speak for him or her.
- It is okay to offer assistance, but wait for an affirmative reply before touching or pushing the person. If the person declines, do not insist on helping. If the person is rude, remember that having a disability does not necessarily mean you are a nice person.
- Treat adults as adults and us first names only if you are using first names for everyone in the group or audience.
- Don't ask personal questions that you would not ask someone who does not have a disability.

- Do not commend people with disabilities for accomplishing tasks that they perform daily out of necessity.
- Always look directly at a deaf person when you are speaking to him or her, even when an interpreter is present.
- Never pretend to understand someone with a speech impediment if you don't. Repeat what you think the person has said so that he or she can confirm your understanding.
- Do not stare or avoid eye contact with someone who has a facial or other disfigurement. However, being initially surprised and looking is perfectly natural." (Progressive Attitudes, pg. 12-13)

"Technology educators must hold high expectations for each student and every school. Standards, by themselves, cannot erase the results of poverty, or ethnic and cultural discrimination. It is essential all students have equal opportunities to study technology and that inequalities in school resources be addressed. It is also important that safe and supportive environments be provided for the teaching of technology and that schools have an adequate supply of knowledgeable teachers who are motivated and qualified to provide exceptional learning experiences. {Dugger, pg. 43) AS the standards for technology are planned we must still assure that all are getting the articles listed. As we as teachers upgrade the various programs at all times.

The Americans with Disabilities Act has made a large impact on those that it is intended to help. It has set standards to make sure that all have equal opportunity in spite of disabilities. To repeat what was said earlier ADA should of course not be thought of as a burden that has been placed on schools and other facilities by the federal government, but a chance for all people to have the same opportunities. In concluding, the students we have at Weaver High School who have a disability would have gone to an alternative school and been kept away from other students. This type of a program

benefits many. The students who are admitted to Weaver High School and also the students at the school who do not have a disability. A important thing to remember is that in our lifetime many of us will have a disability. This can be from an accident or illness. The disability may will be corrected over a period of time but the person will have had experienced what others have to adjust to all their lives. ADA does not cover temporary disabilities such as the broken limb from a skiing accident, it covers permanent and some long time disabilities. This temporary experience can also help one to feel the stereotyping that can result from persons observing disabled individuals. Very often they will be thought of as one of those people. Besides the activities that are used above treating all students the same is important. If as in the case of one former Weaver High School student who used a wheel chair, he would cut classes at times. He should have been treated like any other student who was cutting class. We should not feel sorry for someone who has a disability but just understanding and the opportunity to do the same things as non disabled persons. We can't tell all about that person from seeing them, we must get to know them. The person with a disability may in fact be better off than the person who feels bad for them. Understanding of the rules of ADA as well as the cause of the disability and and several ways

I have been involved in a number of projects that are interdisciplinary and that have helped to motivate students in technology education classes as well as other classes. These programs have helped to bring attention to technology education and also make our programs appreciated by the whole school community. Working with the Americans with Disabilities Act has allowed our program to do the above while at the

same time making an impact on the live of students due to the activities that we are involved in.

Craig B. Clark is a teacher at Weaver High School where he has taught technology education for twenty one years. He has been the schools advisor to the Technology Student Association and is the president-elect to the Connecticut Technology Education Association.

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